

REMARKS

Applicants have considered the outstanding official action. It is respectfully submitted that the claims are in condition for allowance as set forth below.

Claims 23-27, which were previously withdrawn from consideration due to restriction under 35 U.S.C. § 121, are canceled.

The pending rejections are as follows:

- (1) Claims 1, 4-10, 18, 20 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,694,661 B1 (Langford); and
- (2) Claims 2 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Langford as applied to claims 1 and 10 above, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,685,103 (Wiggins).

Applicants respectfully note that both art rejections rely on Langford. Langford, however, is not a prior art reference under § 102(e) or § 103(a) to the claimed invention since the claimed invention has an earlier effective filing date than Langford. Specifically, Langford was filed on August 28, 2002. The present patent application claims benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 120 of parent application, U.S. Serial No. 09/938,723 which was filed on August 27, 2001, now issued as U.S. Patent No. 6,726,163 B2 on April 27, 2004. Accordingly, the present patent

6215/CONT/USSN 10/797,033
Group Art Unit 3641

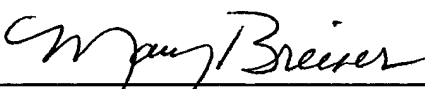
application has a priority filing date of August 27, 2001, which precedes the August 28, 2002 filing date of the Langford reference. As such, Langford is not a prior art reference to the claimed invention of the present patent application. Thus, the prior art rejections fail since Langford is the only applied reference as to the § 102(e) rejection and the primary reference as to the § 103(a) rejection.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the § 102 and § 103 rejections is respectfully requested.

Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance of the claims is respectfully urged.

Respectfully submitted,

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